

**Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Paine, March 25, 1806,  
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Ford.**

**TO THOMAS PAINE**

Washington, Mar. 25, 06.

Dear Sir, —It has not been in my power to sooner acknolege the receipt of your favor of Mar. 15. With France we have no difference, no subject of negotiation. Our differences are with Spain & England. With the former we are making a last effort at peaceable accommodation. The subject is merely a settlement of the limits of Louisiana & our right of passing down the rivers of Florida. This negotiation is to be held at Paris, where we may have the benefit of the good offices of France, but she will be no party to the contract. Mr. Bowdoin our minister to Spain being now at Paris, & Armstrong there of course, the full powers have been sent to them for that reason. It has not been in contemplation to look for any other hand. Lately indeed it has been pressed that these gentlemen being from the middle & northern divisions of the country, & the interest to be arranged being merely a geographical one, exclusively concerning the Southern & Western states, some person of that geographical position ought to be added whose knowledge of the subject & interest in it would give security & confidence to the Southern & Western states that it will be pursued with knowledge & zeal. Should this opinion prevail the 3d commissioner must of course be selected geographically.

With respect to the rights of neutrality, we have certainly a great interest in their settlement. But this depends exclusively on the will of two characters, Buonaparte & Alexander. The dispositions of the former to have them placed on liberal grounds are

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known. The interest of the latter should insure the same disposition. The only thing to be done is to bring the two characters together to treat on the subject. All the minor maritime powers of Europe will of course concur with them. We have not failed to use such means as we possess to induce these two sovereigns to avail the world of it's present situation to declare and enforce the laws of nature & convenience on the seas.

But the organization of the treaty making power by our Constitution is too particular for us to commit the nation in so great an operation with all the European powers. With such a federal phalanx in the Senate, compact & vigilant for opportunities to do mischief, the addition of a very few other votes, misled by accidental or imperfect views of the subject, would suffice to commit us most dangerously. All we can do therefore is to encourage others to declare & guarantee neutral rights, by excluding all intercourse with any nation which infringes them, & so leave a niche in their compact for us, if our treaty making power shall chuse to occupy it.

From these views you will perceive that geographical & accidental circumstances have designated our commissioners, and that we cannot derive from your agency on this occasion the benefits you have heretofore rendered in a different line.

With England I flatter myself our difficulties will be dissipated by the disasters of her allies, the change of her ministry, and the measures which Congress are likely to adopt to furnish motives for her becoming just to us: and on the whole I cannot but hope that in the general settlement of the affairs of nations now on the tapis, ours also will be satisfactorily settled; so as to ensure to us those years of peace & prosperity which will place us beyond the reach of European wrong-doers. Accept my friendly salutations & assurances of esteem & respect.